

Enrollment soars at A&M

Officials say freshman class has grown by 183 percent since '10

By **MARIE MARTIN**
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The Eagle is flying high.

Since fall 2009, Texas A&M University-Texarkana has experienced significant growth in enrollment and student credit hours, according to recent reports. Freshman enrollment alone has grown by 183 percent since fall 2010, which is when the school welcomed its first freshman class.

A&M-Texarkana previously

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had only junior and senior students.

Today, 1,952 undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled in classes for the fall semester—293 more students than for fall 2009. However, the university added only 44 students since fall 2010.

"We are excited about the incredible growth experienced at A&M-Texarkana over the last two years, as well as the quality and commitment of our student body," said university President Dr. C.B. Rathburn.

Freshmen make up about 19 percent of this year's total enrollment. According to university figures, 225 of the 368 freshmen enrolled live on campus in the university's new residence hall.

There were 130 students in the first freshmen class.

"Student response to Bringle Lake Village has exceeded our expectations, prompting plans for a second residence hall to begin construction next year," Rathburn said Thursday. "Campus excitement and involvement is at an all-time high, and the expectations for continued enrollment growth are positive."

However, A&M-Texarkana lost ground with its most senior classmen. Graduate student credit hour and graduate enrollment numbers dipped substantially.

Last year, the university enrolled 600 graduate students. This year, the number dropped to 487, a decrease of nearly 19 percent.

The decline also accounts for a reduction in classes—from 3,469 graduate student credit hours in fall 2010 to 2,853 in fall 2011.

Rathburn said the dip is a nationwide trend.

"Graduate students are traditionally older, and most of our graduate students are full-time professionals. The trend in decline in graduate enrollments can be found across the country due in great part to

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A&M

Continued from Page 1A

the economy," Rathburn said. "Folks are focused on their careers and family, and when money is tight, graduate studies are often postponed until things are brighter financially."

Rathburn said he looks for recovery in graduate enrollments this summer.

"We anticipate that this number will rebound when the economy improves," Rathburn said. "In addition, we anticipate growth in graduate enrollments as we produce more undergraduate-degree completers. The more baccalaureate graduates you produce, the more graduate students you will have."

The university is especially proud of the student credit hours for all students.

Rathburn said the credit hours "by far is the most important measure of growth. A student taking one class generates three SCH. Some students can generate as much as 18 SCH per semester.

"We are funded by the state based on SCH generated; head count is not a factor in funding," he said.

A&M by the numbers

	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	% Difference between 2009-11
HEADCOUNT				
Undergrad Headcount	1,061	1,308	1,465	38.1 %
Graduate Headcount	598	600	487	-18.6 %
Total Headcount	1,659	1,908	1,952	17.7 %
SCH				
Undergrad SCH	10,350	13,681	16,663	61 %
Graduate SCH	3,060	3,469	2,853	-6.8 %
Total SCH	13,410	17,150	19,516	45.5 %
OTHER				
Freshman Enrollment	NA	130	368	183 % (2010-11)
Living on Campus	0	0	225	NA

Numbers supplied by Texas A&M University-Texarkana officials.

According to records, the university's SCH grew by 45.5 percent since 2009.

In fall 2009, undergraduate and graduate students logged 13,410 student credit hours. In 2011, the student credit hours hit just below 20,000 at 19,516.

Undergraduates accounted for the growth. Their credit hours grew by 61 percent—from 10,350 in fall 2009 to 16,663 in fall 2011.

"The clear measure of student growth for both funding and overall institutional

activity is SCH growth. We have experienced an incredible growth in full-time students over the last two years; that is why our SCH growth is exceeding our head-count growth," Rathburn said. "We not only have 38 percent more

students on campus, our students on the average are taking significantly more classes per student."

Some additional statistics for A&M include:

■ During fall semester 1979, A&M-Texarkana, formerly East Texas State University, had 1,068 students. Based on this benchmark, the university's student population has almost doubled.

■ In years past, the average age of students at the university was 32. For fall 2011, it is 29. "This number should continue to go down as the freshman population increases," school officials said.

■ The student population is 70 percent female and 30 percent male. In the past, the ratio was 65 percent female and 35 percent male.

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See **A&M** on **Page 2A**